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# Pentagon Chief Assails Article on Shuttle Trip

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Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger yesterday denounced as "the height of journalistic irresponsibility" a report in The Washington Post yesterday giving details about the Pentagon's classified Jan. 23 space shuttle mission.

In response to Mr. Weinberger's charge, Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor of The Post, said, "There was nothing in the article that violates national security, and the public is ill-served by silence."

Citing national security reasons, the Pentagon had sought to prevent speculation by news organizations regarding the military purpose and payload of the shuttle mission, which is being sponsored by the Department of Defense. On Monday a Pentagon official warned that such speculation might prompt an investigation by the Department of Defense as to the source of information.

The Associated Press and NBC News confirmed Monday that they had agreed, at the Pentagon's request citing national security needs, not to use information they were preparing to present in news reports on the mission.

## News Service Decides to Publish

The Post's article yesterday, which included details about the satellite such as its orbit, cost and function, prompted The Associated Press to release a similar article. In its article, A.P. explained that it had "agreed not to use the information so long as it remained secret."

The White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, said President Reagan believed The Post should not have published the information but added that Mr. Reagan had not instructed him to complain to The Post's editors.

Mr. Weinberger was asked in an interview on Cable News Network yesterday if he could confirm information in the Post article.

"No, I certainly can't," he said. "I can confirm only that it's the height of journalistic irresponsibility to violate requests that are made. These requests were made and responsibly honored by many networks: ABC, NBC, CBS, Associated Press."

"The Washington Post felt that they simply had to run the story which a great many people had. They ran it with typical, usual inaccuracies. But it is unfortunate that there isn't more responsibility of the kind that was shown

by the other major networks and news services."

Asked if the article represented a danger to national security, Mr. Weinberger responded:

"I think it is. I think it is something that should not be discussed in the public prints. There are certain things that we have to do, that we should do, that when they're published, can only give aid and comfort to the enemy."

Mr. Weinberger also said no investigation had been initiated to determine the source of The Post's information.

Mr. Bradlee, in an interview over CBS radio yesterday morning, responded to Mr. Weinberger's comments. "I don't want to get in any kind of fight with him," Mr. Bradlee said.

Unlike A.P. and NBC News, The Post was not asked by the Pentagon to withhold any information, he said. "It's important that the country know that no request was made of The Post, none at all that I know about," Mr. Bradlee said. "Certainly none was made to me. The information in there is absolutely simple information. Very little different from what CBS said the night before. And there is no violation of any kind of security. Nobody's interested in doing that."

A CBS spokesman said the only reference CBS News had made to the shuttle payload was to describe it in the Monday evening news broadcast as "a new generation of intelligence satellite." The spokesman said the news report had provided no further detail.

## 'Matter of Public Record'

Later yesterday, Mr. Bradlee went on to say:

"We take it most seriously when anyone says that a story we printed breaches national security. This morning's story was a careful review of what is known about the upcoming shuttle launch. We kept out of our story information we knew the Pentagon considered sensitive."

"Virtually every fact we mentioned is a matter of public record. The Pentagon itself, in public Congressional testimony, has gone into far greater detail about surveillance satellites than we did in our story. Given all of this, we think Secretary Weinberger's reaction is not justified."

The Pentagon's requests to The Associated Press and NBC News not to disclose information about the mission



Associated Press

Caspar W. Weinberger

followed efforts by those news organizations to get Pentagon confirmation of the information. Mr. Bradlee said he did not know whether The Post had contacted the Pentagon before publishing the report.

## A.P. Explains Decisions

Louis D. Boccardi, A.P.'s executive vice president, said yesterday that the news agency stood by both its decisions, first to comply with the Pentagon's request not to issue its article and then to go ahead with it after The Post's report.

"I think we did the right thing at the time that we did it," Mr. Boccardi said. "The circumstances were different."

Last night, NBC News broadcast a report on the shuttle mission, but "not all we found out was included in it for national security reasons," said William R. McAndrew, a spokesman.

Aviation Week and Space Technology, a magazine that follows aerospace issues, had also been asked by the Pentagon not to publish information it had regarding the shuttle mission. William H. Gregory, the editor, said the request was moot because the information had been obtained with the understanding that it would not be published.

But yesterday he said of the information, "We're certainly not going to sit on it."

He also said the Pentagon's efforts to silence speculation on the mission payload with threats of possible investigations served to goad news organizations to make the information public.

"The Pentagon poured gasoline on the fire," Mr. Gregory said.